recoveries of OMCs and to protect the consumers from the adverse effect of rising international oil prices.

Difficulty in the purchase of Ethanol

2453. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that oil companies like to use Ethanol in place of petrol but they are facing practical problems in purchasing ethanol;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps Government would take to uniform the purchase system in all the States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) At present there is 5% blending of ethanol with petrol. Oil Marketing Companies are procuring ethanol from indigenous producers through open tenders with validity for three years extendable by two more years. As against industry's requirement of 180 crore litres of ethanol for a period of three years, the Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have been able to contract 140.4 crore litres and they have so far procured 29.5 crore litres under the programme (as on 31.03.2008). However, the difficulty in the purchase of ethanol is due to levies/taxes on ethanol imposed by the different States. The matter has been taken up with the concerned State Governments to reduce/remove the duties and taxes on ethanol meant for doping with petrol. Some of the States like Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand have recently exempted/reduced the import and export fee.

Damage to Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya

2454. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware about grave damage to Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya, the world famous Buddhist pilgrimage place;

(b) if so, what action is taken by Government to protect and preserve the sacred Bodhi tree;

(c) whether it is a fact that criminal cases are filed for such actions against officials of Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) As reported by Government of Bihar, an investigation was carried out by Forest Research Institute, Dehradun regarding damage to Bodhi Tree. As per their report, it appears that the cut on Bodhi Tree is more than three years old. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Bodhi Temple Management Committee and Forest Research Institute, Dehradun for future maintenance and management of the Bodhivriksha.

(c) and (d) A Complaint No. 850/2007 has been filed by Shri Arup Brahmachari Swamiji in the Civil Court. The case is pending in the Court.